

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUWAIT 01447 01 OF 02 201123Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 1447

USIA FOR INA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: XF, PFOR, KU

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENTS ON
PALESTINIAN HOMELAND

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT CARTER'S REMARKS IN CLINTON, MASSACHUSETTS, MARCH 16, REGARDING A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND, WERE GIVEN HEAVY COVERAGE IN ALL KUWAITI DAILIES. WHILE THE INITIAL HEADLINES WERE GENERALLY FAVORABLE, THE SUBSEQUENT EDITORIAL COMMENT (LARGELY THE PRODUCT OF PALESTINIAN AND OTHER FOREIGN ARABS IN KUWAIT) RANGED FROM QUESTIONING HOPEFULNESS TO BITTER CYNICISM. THE PRESIDENT'S REPORTED DESIRE NOT TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED WITH THE PLO REP AT THE UN EVOKED SPECIAL CRITICISM. END SUMMARY

2. HEADLINES. ON MARCH 18, FRONT PAGE HEADLINES RAN AS FOLLOWS: AL WATAN, "CARTER AFFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF OIL IN MIDDLE EAST SOLUTION .. PALESTINIANS WELCOME CARTER'S LATEST STATEMENTS ..." AL ANBA, "CARTER RESHUFFLES SETTLEMENT GAME PAPERS. ESTABLISHING PALESTINIAN HOMELAND IS A CONDITION FOR GUARANTEE OF PEACE. ISRAEL CONCERNED, UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 KUWAIT 01447 01 OF 02 201123Z

PALESTINIANS WELCOME..." AL RAI AL AM, "PALESTINIANS WELCOME CARTER'S STATEMENTS. FOR FIRST TIME AMERICAN PRESIDENT SPEAKS OF NECESSITY FOR ESTABLISHING HOMELAND FOR PALESTININANS..." AL QABAS, "CARTER: PALESTINIANS HAVE RIGHT TO ESTABLISH HOMELAND..." AL SIYASA, "PLO WELCOMES CARTER STATEMENT ON PALESTINIAN HOMELAND...RABIN: WE ACCEPT THIS HOMELAND IN JORDAN..." HEADLINES IN ALL CASES

FOLLOWED BY STORIES TAKEN FROM WIRE SERVICES. KUWAIT TIMES (ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY) DID NOT CARRY STORY UNTIL MARCH 19, UNDER FRONT PAGE HEADLINES, "ARABS WELCOME CARTER STATEMENT ..."

3. EDITORIALS. EDITORIAL COMMENT ON MARCH 19 BELIES PREVIOUS DAY'S HEADLINES. CARTER STATEMENT GENERALLY VIEWED AS "AMBIGUOUS." REACTION PUBLISHED IN ALL FIVE ARABIC DAILES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE KUWAIT TIMES ON MARCH 19.

A. AL ANBA (ARABIC DAILY) CARRIED UNSIGNED EDITORIALS ON BOTH MARCH 18 AND 19. THE FIRST COMMENTS SARCASTICALLY, "THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS SUCCEDED SO FAR IN MAKING ITS MIDDLE EAST POLICY CLEAR TO EXTENT OF BEWILDERMENT AND AMBIGUOUS TO THE EXTENT OF INVITING ALARM..." EDITORIAL NOTES CARTER MADE DEFENSIBLE BORDER STATEMENT TO "SATISFY..." ISRAEL AND "PALESTINIAN HOMELAND" STATEMENT TO "SATISFY ..." ARABS. WRITER SEES NO CONTRADICTION BUT CALLS STATEMENT ON PALESTINIAN HOMELAND "GEOGRAPHICALLY AMBIGUOUS..." NEVERTHELESS, WRITER ADMITS "CARTER STATEMENT SEEMS MORE BALANCED THAN ANY OTHER STATEMENT BY FORMER PRESIDENTS..." ON MARCH 19, AL ANBA CRITICIZES CARTER FOR REFUSAL TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED "SHAKING HANDS WITH PLO REPRESENTATIVE AT THE U.N...", CALLS IT A "SCANDAL..." THAT A MAN WHO PREACHES "MORALS, IDEALS AND BIBLE TEACHINGS..." WOULD "EVADE THE SIMPLEST BASIC HUMAN RIGHT..." WRITER OBSERVES THAT "CARTER WAS NOT EMBARRASSED TO SHAKE HANDS WITH ISRAELI REPRESENTATIVE...OR THOSE OF SOUTH AFRICA OR RHODESIA..."

B. AL QABAS (MARCH 19), IN COMMENTS WRITTEN BY ANTONIOS UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 KUWAIT 01447 01 OF 02 201123Z

KARAM, SYRIAN EXPATRIATE AND A PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS AT KUWAIT UNIVERSITY, ALSO REFERS TO CARTER'S STATEMENT ON "PALESTINIAN HOMELAND..." AS A "CORRECTIVE..." MEASURE TO HIS STATEMENT RE ISRAEL'S DEFENSIBLE BORDERS. THIS STATEMENT AND CARTER'S ACCEPTANCE OF PLO REPRESENTATIVE AT UN RECEPTION CONSIDERED "POSITIVE STEPS..." WHICH HAVE "REGAINED TRUST OF ARAB MODERATE LEADERS INCLUDING ARAFAT..." HOWEVER, AL QABAS CONCLUDES WITH SOME RESERVATIONS REGARDING "DEFENSIBLE BORDERS" FOR ISRAEL AND A "HOMELAND..." FOR PALESTINIANS. THIS "CLEAR POLICY..." WILL BE "PRESSURED ..." BY BOTH "ZIONISTS AND ARABS..." WRITER IMPLIES US IS USING DELAYING TACTICS "WHICH WOULD MAKE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN TAKE LONGEST POSSIBLE TIME IN HOPE THAT U.S. DEPENDENCE UPON OIL WOULD DECREASE AND WITH IT THE OIL PRESSURE WEAPON..." COMMENTATOR ADVISES ARABS TO COUNTER STRATEGY WITH ONE "TO LIMIT ZIONIST EFFECT ON CARTER AND SHORTEN IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD..." FOR A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND.

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PAGE 01 KUWAIT 01447 02 OF 02 201129Z
ACTION NEA-10

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UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 KUWAIT 1447

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C. AL RAI AL AAM, MARCH 19, IS DUBIOUS, "WONDERS..." WHAT IS "UNDER THE BREAD CRUST..." EDITORIAL CRITICAL OF CARTER REFUSAL TO SHAKE HAND OF PLO REPRESENTATIVE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND OF "AMBIGUOUS STATEMENT ABOUT HOMELAND FOR PALESTINIANS ..." WRITER SPECULATES ON U.S. MOTIVES AND WHETHER THEY RELATE TO A HOMELAND ON THE EAST OR WEST BANK OF JORDAN RIVER. EDITORIAL WARNS THAT "CARTER WAS ABLE TO LEARN FAST--AS HE PROMISED..." AND THAT HIS "AMBIGUOUS EXPRESSION..." ABOUT A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND WAS MADE TO INDUCE "ISRAELI CONCERN..." AND TO BUY TIME.

D. AL SYASA, MARCH 19, IN COMMENTARY BY MUSTAFA ABU LIBDEH, CONCENTRATES MORE ON "CONFRONTATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION..." BUT BRIEFLY REMARKS ON "CARTER'S STYLE ..." WHETHER DEALING WITH THE SOVIETS OR THE MIDDLE EAST, AS "INVITING EMBARRASSMENT..."

E. AL WANTA, MARCH 19, DID NOT ELABORATE ON CARTER'S PALESTINIAN HOMELAND STATEMENT BUT CARRIED ARAFAT REACTION ON FRONT PAGE, "I TRUST CARTE AND WILL DO MY BEST TO ASSIST HIM..." WATAN ALSO HEADLINED, "POPULAR FRONT: WE REFUSE TO COOPERATE WITH AMERICA AND WE TRUST ARAFAT..."

F. KUWAIT TIMES EDITORIAL CAPTIONED "EXERCISE IN
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PAGE 02 KUWAIT 01447 02 OF 02 201129Z

AMBIGUITY" PROBABLY WRITTEN BY DARA KADVA, SENIOR EDITOR OF INDIAN ORIGIN AND CONSTANT CRITIC OF U.S. POLICY. KADVA COMMENTS, "IT IS A FAMILIAR GAME OF BIG POWERS TO ISSUE VAGUE AND AMBIGUOUS STATEMENTS...MERELY FOR PURPOSE OF PLACATING CERTAIN PARTIES..." HE CLAIMS CARTER LEFT MANY QUESTIONS UNANSWERED "SO THAT ARAB PUBLIC OPINION IS GIVEN A GOOD IMAGE OF AMERICA, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME STARTING AN ENDLESS ARGUMENT...THAT WILL ENSURE THE PROPOSAL NEVER...MAKES ANY PROGRESS..." KADVA BELIEVES "PRESIDENT CARTER KNEW HE WAS INDULGING IN A GIMMICK TO PLEASE ARABS WHO HAVE BEEN RUFFLED BY GAFFES A WEEK EARLIER WHEN HE TWICE PUBLICLY CALLED FOR "MINOR ADJUSTMENTS" AND "DEFENSIBLE" BORDERS FOR ISRAEL..." WRITER CLAIMS THESE REMARKS "PANICKED THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND WHITE HOUSE WHICH IS NOW TRYING TO REPAIR DAMAGE WITHOUT REALLY DOING ANYTHING SUBSTANTIAL TOWARD PEACE..." KUWAIT TIMES ON MARCH 19 RAN BACK PAGE STORY "ARAFAT PLEDGES CO-OPERATION IN SEARCH FOR PEACE ..." BASED ON AP. SURPRISINGLY, THE KUWAIT TIMES CARRIED THE FULL TEXT OF CARTER'S SPEECH AT THE U.N.

4. TELEVISION. FINALLY, KUWAIT TV GAVE EXTRAORDINARILY LONG COVERAGE, FOUR MINUTES, TO CARTER'S MASSACHUSETTS REMARKS ON BOTH ITS ARABIC AND ENGLISH NEWSCASTS ON EVENING OF MARCH 17.

5. COMMENT: CLEARLY, FIRST CLEAR REFERENCE TO AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN "HOMELAND," EVEN IF UNSPECIFIC, HAS CAPTURED ARAB ATTENTION AND DONE MUCH TO RESTORE PERCEPTION, THOUGH STILL SUSPICIOUS, OF US BALANCE IN THE QUESTION, PARTICULARLY COMING SO SOON AFTER PRESIDENT'S REFERENCE TO "DEFENSIBLE BORDERS" FOR ISRAEL. TENOR OF EDITORIALS DEMONSTRATES THAT ARABS STILL NEED FURTHER CONVINCING ON THIS SCORE, BUT SOME POSSIBLY NOW SEE GLIMMER OF LIGHT AT END OF TUNNEL. IMPACT ON PNC COUNCIL IN CAIRO MAY NOT BE MAJOR, BUT ARAFAT'S PROMPT "WELCOME" OF THIS UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 KUWAIT 01447 02 OF 02 201129Z

STATEMENT SUGGESTS ANXIETY OF PLO MODERATES TO HEAR EXPRESSIONS OF US CONSIDERATION OF PALESTINIAN CONCERN TO BOLSTER THEIR POSITION.
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Message Attributes

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